CONJUNCTIONS

Definition

Some words are satisfied spending an evening at home, alone, eating ice-cream right out of the box, watching *Seinfeld* re-runs on TV, or reading a good book. Others aren't happy unless they're out on the town, mixing it up with other words; they're *joiners* and they just can't help themselves. **A conjunction is a joiner, a word that connects (conjoins) parts of a sentence.**

Coordinating Conjunctions

The simple, little conjunctions are called **coordinating conjunctions** (you can click on the words to see specific descriptions of each one):

Coordinating Conjunctions						
and	but	or	yet	for	nor	so

(It may help you remember these conjunctions by recalling that they all have fewer than four letters. Also, remember the acronym **FANBOYS**: For-And-Nor-But-Or-Yet-So. Be careful of the words *then* and *now*; neither is a coordinating conjunction, so what we say about coordinating conjunctions' roles in a sentence and punctuation does not apply to those two words.)

When a coordinating conjunction connects two **independent clauses**, it is often (but not always) accompanied by a comma:

- Ulysses wants to play for UConn, but he has had trouble meeting the academic requirements.

When the two independent clauses connected by a coordinating conjunction are nicely balanced or brief, many writers will omit the comma:

- Ulysses has a great jump shot but he isn't quick on his feet.

The comma is always correct when used to separate two independent clauses connected by a coordinating conjunction. See **Punctuation Between Two Independent Clauses** for further help.

A comma is also correct when *and* is used to attach the last item of a serial list, although many writers (especially in newspapers) will omit that final comma:

- Ulysses spent his summer studying basic math, writing, and reading comprehension.

When a coordinating conjunction is used to connect all the elements in a series, a comma is not used:

- Presbyterians and Methodists and Baptists are the prevalent Protestant congregations in Oklahoma.

A comma is also used with *but* when expressing a contrast:

- This is a useful rule, but difficult to remember.

In most of their other roles as joiners (other than joining independent clauses, that is), coordinating conjunctions can join two sentence elements without the help of a comma.

- Hemingway and Fitzgerald are among the American expatriates of the between-the-wars era.
- Hemingway was renowned for his clear style and his insights into American notions of male identity.

- It is hard to say whether Hemingway <u>or</u> Fitzgerald is the more interesting cultural icon of his day.
- Although Hemingway is sometimes disparaged for his unpleasant portrayal of women <u>and</u> for his glorification of *machismo*, we nonetheless find some sympathetic, even heroic, female figures in his novels <u>and</u> short stories.

Beginning a Sentence with *And* or *But*

A frequently asked question about conjunctions is whether *and* or *but* can be used at the beginning of a sentence. This is what R.W. Burchfield has to say about this use of *and*:

> There is a persistent belief that it is improper to begin a sentence with *And*, but this prohibition has been cheerfully ignored by standard authors from Anglo-Saxon times onwards. An initial *And* is a useful aid to writers as the narrative continues.
>
> Authority: *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage*
> edited by R.W. Burchfield. Clarendon Press: Oxford, England. 1996.
> Used with the permission of Oxford University Press.

The same is true with the conjunction *but*. A sentence beginning with *and* or *but* will tend to draw attention to itself and its transitional function. Writers should examine such sentences with two questions in mind: (1) would the sentence and paragraph function just as well without the initial conjunction? (2) should the sentence in question be connected to the previous sentence? If the initial conjunction still seems appropriate, use it.

Among the coordinating conjunctions, the most common, of course, are *and*, *but*, and *or*. It might be helpful to explore the uses of these three little words. The examples below by no means exhaust the possible meanings of these conjunctions.

AND

a. To suggest that one idea is chronologically sequential to another: "Tashonda sent in her applications <u>and</u> waited by the phone for a response."

b. To suggest that one idea is the result of another: "Willie heard the weather report <u>and</u> promptly boarded up his house."

c. To suggest that one idea is in contrast to another (frequently replaced by *but* in this usage): "Juanita is brilliant <u>and</u> Shalimar has a pleasant personality.

d. To suggest an element of surprise (sometimes replaced by *yet* in this usage): "Hartford is a rich city <u>and</u> suffers from many symptoms of urban blight."

e. To suggest that one clause is dependent upon another, conditionally (usually the first clause is an imperative): "Use your credit cards frequently <u>and</u> you'll soon find yourself deep in debt."

f. To suggest a kind of "comment" on the first clause: "Charlie became addicted to gambling — <u>and</u> that surprised no one who knew him."

BUT

a. To suggest a contrast that is unexpected in light of the first clause: "Joey lost a fortune in the stock market, <u>but</u> he still seems able to live quite comfortably."

b. To suggest in an affirmative sense what the first part of the sentence implied in a negative way (sometimes replaced by *on the contrary*): "The club never invested foolishly, <u>but</u> used the services of a sage investment counselor."

c. To connect two ideas with the meaning of "with the exception of" (and then the second word takes over as subject): "Everybody <u>but</u> Goldenbreath is trying out for the team."

OR

a. To suggest that only one possibility can be realized, excluding one or the other: "You can study hard for this exam <u>or</u> you can fail."

b. To suggest the inclusive combination of alternatives: "We can broil chicken on the grill tonight, <u>or</u> we can just eat leftovers.

    c. To suggest a refinement of the first clause: "Smith College is the premier all-women's college in the country, <u>or</u> so it seems to most Smith College alumnae."

    d. To suggest a restatement or "correction" of the first part of the sentence: "There are no rattlesnakes in this canyon, <u>or</u> so our guide tells us."

    e. To suggest a negative condition: "The New Hampshire state motto is the rather grim "Live free <u>or</u> die."

    f. To suggest a negative alternative without the use of an imperative (see use of *and* **above**): "They must approve his political style <u>or</u> they wouldn't keep electing him mayor."

The Others . . .

    The conjunction ***NOR*** is not extinct, but it is not used nearly as often as the other conjunctions, so it might feel a bit odd when *nor* does come up in conversation or writing. Its most common use is as the little brother in the correlative pair, *neither-nor (see **below**)*:

- He is neither sane <u>nor</u> brilliant.
- That is neither what I said <u>nor</u> what I meant.

>It can be used with other negative expressions:

- That is not what I meant to say, <u>nor</u> should you interpret my statement as an admission of guilt.

It is possible to use *nor* without a preceding negative element, but it is unusual and, to an extent, rather stuffy:

- George's handshake is as good as any written contract, nor has he ever proven untrustworthy.

    The word ***YET*** functions sometimes as an adverb and has several meanings: in addition ("yet another cause of trouble" or "a simple yet noble woman"), even ("yet more expensive"), still ("he is yet a novice"), eventually ("they may yet win"), and so soon as now ("he's not here yet"). It also functions as a coordinating conjunction meaning something like "nevertheless" or "but." The word *yet* seems to carry an element of distinctiveness that *but* can seldom register.

- John plays basketball well, <u>yet</u> his favorite sport is badminton.
- The visitors complained loudly about the heat, <u>yet</u> they continued to play golf every day.

In sentences such as the second one, above, the pronoun subject of the second clause ("they," in this case) is often left out. When that happens, the comma preceding the conjunction might also disappear: "The visitors complained loudly yet continued to play golf every day." *Yet* is sometimes combined with other conjunctions, *but* or *and*. It would not be unusual to see <u>and yet</u> in sentences like the ones above. This usage is acceptable.

The word **FOR** is most often used as a preposition, of course, but it does serve, on rare occasions, as a coordinating conjunction. Some people regard the conjunction <u>for</u> as rather highfalutin and literary, and it does tend to add a bit of weightiness to the text. Beginning a sentence with the conjunction "for" is probably not a good idea, except when you're singing "For he's a jolly good fellow. "For" has serious sequential implications and in its use the order of thoughts is more important than it is, say, with *because* or *since*. Its function is to introduce the reason for the preceding clause:

- John thought he had a good chance to get the job, <u>for</u> his father was on the company's board of trustees.
- Most of the visitors were happy just sitting around in the shade, <u>for</u> it had been a long, dusty journey on the train.

Be careful of the conjunction **SO**. Sometimes it can connect two independent clauses along with a comma, but sometimes it can't. For instance, in this sentence,

- Soto is not the only Olympic athlete in his family, so are his brother, sister, and his Uncle Chet.

where the word *so* means "as well" or "in addition," most careful writers would use a semicolon between the two independent clauses. In the following sentence, where *so* is acting like a minor-league "therefore," the conjunction and the comma are adequate to the task:

- Soto has always been nervous in large gatherings, so it is no surprise that he avoids crowds of his adoring fans.

Sometimes, at the beginning of a sentence, *so* will act as a kind of summing up device or transition, and when it does, it is often set off from the rest of the sentence with a comma:

- So, the sheriff peremptorily removed the child from the custody of his parents.

The Case of *Then* and *Than*

In some parts of the United States, we are told, *then* and *than* not only look alike, they sound alike. Like a teacher with twins in her classroom, you need to be able to distinguish between these two words; otherwise, they'll become mischievous. They are often used and they should be used for the right purposes.

Than is used to make comparisons. In the sentence "Piggy would rather be rescued <u>then</u> stay on the island," we have employed the wrong word because a comparison is being made between Piggy's two choices; we need *than* instead. In the sentence, "Other <u>than</u> *Pincher Martin*, Golding did not write another popular novel," the adverbial construction "other than" helps us make an implied comparison; this usage is perfectly acceptable in the United States but careful writers in the UK try to avoid it (Burchfield).

Generally, the only question about *than* arises when we have to decide whether the word is being used as a conjunction or as a preposition. If it's a preposition (and Merriam-Webster's dictionary provides for this usage), then the word that follows it should be in the object form.

- He's taller and somewhat more handsome than <u>me</u>.
- Just because you look like him doesn't mean you

can play better than <u>him</u>.

Most careful writers, however, will insist that *than* be used as a conjunction; it's as if part of the clause introduced by *than* has been left out:

- He's taller and somewhat more handsome than <u>I</u> [am handsome].
- You can play better than <u>he</u> [can play].

In formal, academic text, you should probably use *than* as a conjunction and follow it with the subject form of a pronoun (where a pronoun is appropriate).

Then is a conjunction, but it is not one of the little conjunctions listed at the top of this page. We can use the **FANBOYS** conjunctions to connect two independent clauses; usually, they will be accompanied (preceded) by a comma. Too many students think that *then* works the same way: "Caesar invaded Gaul, then he turned his attention to England." You can tell the difference between *then* and a coordinating conjunction by trying to move the word around in the sentence. We can write "he then turned his attention to England"; "he turned his attention, then, to England"; he turned his attention to England then." The word can move around within the clause. Try that with a conjunction, and you will quickly see that the conjunction cannot move around. "Caesar invaded Gaul, <u>and</u> then he turned his attention to England." The word *and* is stuck exactly there and cannot move like *then*, which is more like an adverbial conjunction (or conjunctive adverb — see below) than a coordinating conjunction. Our original sentence in this paragraph — "Caesar invaded Gaul, then he turned his attention to England" — is a **comma splice**, a faulty sentence construction in which a comma tries to hold together two independent clauses all by itself: the comma needs a coordinating conjunction to help out, and the word *then* simply doesn't work that way.

Subordinating Conjunctions

A **Subordinating Conjunction** (sometimes called a dependent word or subordinator) comes at the beginning of a **Subordinate (or Dependent) Clause** and establishes the relationship between the dependent clause and the rest of the sentence. It also turns the clause into something that depends on the rest of the sentence for its meaning.

- He took to the stage <u>as though</u> he had been preparing for this moment all his life.
- <u>Because</u> he loved acting, he refused to give up his dream of being in the movies.
- <u>Unless</u> we act now, all is lost.

Notice that some of the subordinating conjunctions in the table below — after, before, since — are also prepositions, but as subordinators they are being used to introduce a clause and to subordinate the following clause to the independent element in the sentence.

Common Subordinating Conjunctions		
after although as as if as long as as though because before even if even though	if if only in order that now that once rather than since so that than that	though till unless until when whenever where whereas wherever while

The Case of *Like* and *As*
Strictly speaking, the word *like* is a preposition, not a conjunction. It can, therefore, be used to introduce a prepositional phrase ("My brother is tall <u>like my father</u>"), but it should not be used to introduce a clause ("My brother can't play the piano ~~like~~ <u>as he did before the</u>

accident" or "It looks ~~like~~ as if basketball is quickly overtaking baseball as America's national sport."). To introduce a clause, it's a good idea to use *as*, *as though*, or *as if*, instead.

- ~~Like~~ As I told you earlier, the lecture has been postponed.
- It looks ~~like~~ as if it's going to snow this afternoon.
- Johnson kept looking out the window ~~like~~ as though he had someone waiting for him.

In formal, academic text, it's a good idea to reserve the use of *like* for situations in which similarities are being pointed out:

- This community college is <u>like</u> a two-year liberal arts college.

However, when you are listing things that have similarities, *such as* is probably more suitable:

- The college has several highly regarded neighbors, ~~like~~ such as the Mark Twain House, St. Francis Hospital, the Connecticut Historical Society, and the UConn Law School.

Omitting *That*

The word *that* is used as a conjunction to connect a subordinate clause to a preceding verb. In this construction *that* is sometimes called the "expletive *that.*" Indeed, the word is often omitted to good effect, but the very fact of easy omission causes some editors to take out the red pen and strike out the conjunction *that* wherever it appears. In the following sentences, we can happily omit the *that* (or keep it, depending on how the sentence sounds to us):

- Isabel knew [that] she was about to be fired.
- She definitely felt [that] her fellow employees hadn't supported her.

- I hope [that] she doesn't blame me.

Sometimes omitting the *that* creates a break in the flow of a sentence, a break that can be adequately bridged with the use of a comma:
- The problem is, ~~that~~ production in her department has dropped.
- Remember, ~~that~~ we didn't have these problems before she started working here.

As a general rule, if the sentence feels just as good without the *that,* if no ambiguity results from its omission, if the sentence is more efficient or elegant without it, then we can safely omit the *that.* Theodore Bernstein lists <u>three conditions in which we should maintain the conjunction *that*</u>:
- When a time element intervenes between the verb and the clause: "The boss said yesterday <u>that</u> production in this department was down fifty percent." (Notice the position of "yesterday.")
- When the verb of the clause is long delayed: "Our annual report revealed <u>that</u> some losses sustained by this department in the third quarter of last year were worse than previously thought." (Notice the distance between the subject "losses" and its verb, "were.")
- When a second *that* can clear up who said or did what: "The CEO said that Isabel's department was slacking off and <u>that</u> production dropped precipitously in the fourth quarter." (Did the CEO say that production dropped or was the drop a result of what he said about Isabel's department? The second *that* makes the sentence clear.)

Beginning a Sentence with *Because*

Somehow, the notion that one should not begin a sentence with the subordinating conjunction *because* retains a mysterious grip on people's sense of writing proprieties. This might come about because a sentence that begins with *because* could well end up a fragment if one is not careful to follow up the "because clause" with an independent clause.

- Because e-mail now plays such a huge role in our communications industry.

When the "because clause" is properly subordinated to another idea (regardless of the position of the clause in the sentence), there is absolutely nothing wrong with it:

- Because e-mail now plays such a huge role in our communications industry, the postal service would very much like to see it taxed in some manner.

Correlative Conjunctions

Some conjunctions combine with other words to form what are called **correlative conjunctions**. They always travel in pairs, joining various sentence elements that should be treated as grammatically equal.

- She led the team <u>not only</u> in statistics <u>but also</u> by virtue of her enthusiasm.
- Polonius said, "<u>Neither</u> a borrower <u>nor</u> a lender be."
- <u>Whether</u> you win this race <u>or</u> lose it doesn't matter as long as you do your best.

Correlative conjunctions sometimes create problems in parallel form. Click **HERE** for help with those problems. Here is a brief list of common correlative conjunctions.

both . . . and not only . . . but also not . . . but either . . . or	neither . . . nor whether . . . or as . . . as

Conjunctive Adverbs

The **conjunctive adverbs** such as *however, moreover, nevertheless, consequently, as a result* are used to create complex relationships between ideas. Refer to the section on **Coherence: Transitions Between Ideas** for an extensive list of conjunctive adverbs categorized according to their various uses and for some advice on their application within sentences (including punctuation issues).

SENTENCE SUBJECTS

The **subject** of a sentence is the person, place, thing, or idea that is *doing* or *being* something. You can find the subject of a sentence if you can find the **verb**. Ask the question, "Who or what 'verbs' or 'verbed'?" and the answer to that question is the subject. For instance, in the sentence "The computers in the Learning Center must be replaced," the verb is "must be replaced." <u>What</u> must be replaced? The *computers*. So the subject is "computers." A **simple subject** is the subject of a sentence stripped of modifiers. The simple subject of the following sentence is *issue*:

> The really important <u>issue</u> of the conference, stripped of all other considerations, is the morality of the nation.

Sometimes, though, a simple subject can be more than one word, even an entire clause. In the following sentence —

> What he had already forgotten about computer repair could fill whole volumes,

—the simple subject is not "computer repair," nor is it "what he had forgotten," nor is it "he." Ask what it is that "could fill whole volumes." Your answer should be that the entire underlined clause is the simple subject.

In English, the subject of a command, order, or suggestion — *you*, the person being directed — is usually left out of the sentence and is said to be the **understood subject**:

- [You] Step lively there or I'll leave you behind!
- Before assembling the swingset, [you] read these instructions carefully.

For purposes of sentence analysis, the do-er or the initiator of action in a sentence is referred to as the **agent** of the sentence. In an active sentence, the subject is the agent:

- The Johnsons added a double garage to their house.
- The jury returned a verdict of manslaughter.

In a **passive sentence**, the agent is not the subject. In fact, sometimes a passive sentence will not contain an agent.

- The dean's report was reviewed by the faculty senate.
- Three cities in the country's interior were bombed.

Subject-Verb Inversion

The normal English order of subject-verb-completer is disturbed only occasionally but under several circumstances. Burchfield* lists about ten situations in which the subject will come after the verb. The most important of these are as follows (subjects in blue):

1. In questions (routinely): "Have you eaten breakfast yet?" "Are you ready?"
2. In **expletive constructions**: "There were four basic causes of the Civil War." "Here is the book."
3. In attributing speech (occasionally, but optionally): "'Help me!' cried Farmer Brown."
4. To give prominence or focus to a particular word or phrase by putting the predicate in the initial position: "Even more important is the chapter dealing with ordnance."

5. When a sentence begins with an adverb or an adverbial phrase or clause: "Seldom <u>has</u> so <u>much</u> been owed by so many to so few."
6. In negative constructions: "I don't believe a word she says, nor <u>does</u> my <u>brother</u>. Come to think of it, neither <u>does</u> her <u>father</u>."
7. After *so:* "I believe her; so <u>does</u> my <u>brother</u>."
8. For emphasis and literary effect: "Into the jaws of Death, / Into the mouth of Hell / <u>Rode</u> the <u>six hundred</u>."**

There are other uses of **inversion**, but most of those result in a strained or literary effect.

*The New Fowler's Modern English Usage edited by R.W. Burchfield. Clarendon Press: Oxford, England. 1996. Used with the permission of Oxford University Press. Examples our own. **from Alfred Lord Tennyson's **"Charge of the Light Brigade"** (1854).

ARTICLES, DETERMINERS, AND QUANTIFIERS

Jump to Articles

Definition

Articles, determiners, and quantifiers are those little words that precede and modify nouns:

> *the* teacher, *a* college, *a bit of* honey, *that* person, *those* people, *whatever* purpose, *either* way, *your* choice

Sometimes these words will tell the reader or listener whether we're referring to a specific or general thing (*the* garage out back; *A* horse! *A* horse! My kingdom for *a* horse!); sometimes they tell how much or how many (*lots of* trees, *several* books, *a great deal of* confusion). The choice of the proper article or determiner to precede a noun or noun phrase is usually not a problem for writers who have grown up speaking English, nor is it a serious problem for non-native

writers whose first language is a romance language such as Spanish. For other writers, though, this can be a considerable obstacle on the way to their mastery of English. In fact, some students from eastern European countries — where their native language has either no articles or an altogether different system of choosing articles and determiners — find that these "little words" can create problems long after every other aspect of English has been mastered.

Determiners are said to "mark" nouns. That is to say, you know a determiner will be followed by a noun. Some categories of determiners are limited (there are only three articles, a handful of possessive pronouns, etc.), but the possessive nouns are as limitless as nouns themselves. This limited nature of most determiner categories, however, explains why determiners are grouped apart from adjectives even though both serve a modifying function. We can imagine that the language will never tire of inventing new adjectives; the determiners (except for those possessive nouns), on the other hand, are well established, and this class of words is not going to grow in number. These categories of determiners are as follows: the articles (an, a, the — see **below**; possessive nouns (Joe's, the priest's, my mother's); possessive pronouns, (his, your, their, whose, etc.); numbers (one, two, etc.); indefinite pronouns (few, more, each, every, either, all, both, some, any, etc.); and demonstrative pronouns. The **demonstratives** (this, that, these, those, such) are discussed in the section on **Demonstrative Pronouns**. Notice that the possessive nouns differ from the other determiners in that they, themselves, are often accompanied by other determiners: "my mother's rug," "the priests's collar," "a dog's life."

This categorization of determiners is based on *Understanding English Grammar* by Martha Kolln. 4rth Edition. MacMillan Publishing Company: New York. 1994.

Some Notes on Quantifiers

Like articles, **quantifiers** are words that precede and modify nouns. They tell us how many or how much. Selecting the correct quantifier depends on your understanding the distinction between

Count and Non-Count Nouns. For our purposes, we will choose the count noun <u>trees</u> and the non-count noun <u>dancing</u>:

🐛 *The following quantifiers will work with <u>count nouns</u>:*
    many trees
    a few trees
    few trees
    several trees
    a couple of trees
    none of the trees

🐛 *The following quantifiers will work with <u>non-count nouns</u>:*
    not much dancing
    a little dancing
    little dancing
    a bit of dancing
    a good deal of dancing
    a great deal of dancing
    no dancing

🐛 *The following quantifiers will work with <u>both count and non-count nouns</u>:*
    all of the trees/dancing
    some trees/dancing
    most of the trees/dancing
    enough trees/dancing
    a lot of trees/dancing
    lots of trees/dancing
    plenty of trees/dancing
    a lack of trees/dancing

In formal academic writing, it is usually better to use *many* and *much* rather than phrases such as *a lot of, lots of* and *plenty of*.

    There is an important difference between **"a little"** and **"little"** (used with non-count words) and between **"a few"** and **"few"** (used with count words). If I say that Tashonda has <u>a little experience</u> in management that means that although Tashonda is no great expert she does have some experience and that experience might well be enough for our purposes. If I say that Tashonda has <u>little experience</u> in management that means that she doesn't have enough experience. If I say that Charlie owns <u>a few books</u> on Latin American literature that means that he has some some books — not a lot of books, but

probably enough for our purposes. If I say that Charlie owns <u>few books</u> on Latin American literature, that means he doesn't have enough for our purposes and we'd better go to the library.

Unless it is combined with *of*, the quantifier **"much"** is reserved for questions and negative statements:

- <u>Much of</u> the snow has already melted.
- How much snow fell yesterday?
- Not much.

Note that the quantifier **"most of the"** must include the definite article *the* when it modifies a specific noun, whether it's a count or a non-count noun: "most of <u>the</u> instructors at this college have a doctorate"; "most of <u>the</u> water has evaporated." With a general plural noun, however (when you are *not* referring to a specific entity), the "of the" is dropped:

- <u>Most colleges</u> have their own admissions policy.
- <u>Most students</u> apply to several colleges.

Authority for this last paragraph: *The Scott, Foresman Handbook for Writers* by Maxine Hairston and John J. Ruszkiewicz. 4th ed. HarperCollins: New York. 1996. Examples our own.

An indefinite article is sometimes used in conjunction with the quantifier **many**, thus joining a plural quantifier with a singular noun (which then takes a singular verb):

- <u>Many a young man</u> has fallen in love with her golden hair.
- <u>Many an apple</u> has fallen by October.

This construction lends itself to a somewhat literary effect (some would say a stuffy or archaic effect) and is best used sparingly, if at all.

Basic Quiz on Choosing Quantifiers

Predeterminers

The **predeterminers** occur prior to other determiners (as you would probably guess from their name). This class of words includes multipliers (*double, twice, four/five times* . . . .); fractional expressions (*one-third, three-quarters,* etc.); the words *both, half,* and *all*; and intensifiers such as *quite, rather,* and *such*.

The *multipliers* precede plural count and mass nouns and occur with singular count nouns denoting number or amount:

- This van holds <u>three times *the*</u> passengers as that sports car.
- My wife is making <u>double *my*</u> / <u>twice *my*</u> salary.
- This time we added <u>five times *the*</u> amount of water.

In *fractional expressions*, we have a similar construction, but here it can be replaced with "of" construction.

- Charlie finished in <u>one-fourth [of] the</u> time his brother took.
- <u>Two-fifths of the</u> respondents reported that <u>half the</u> medication was sufficient.

The *intensifiers* occur in this construction primarily in casual speech and writing and are more common in British English than they are in American English. The intensifier "what" is often found in stylistic fragments: "We visited my brother in his dorm room. What a mess!"

- This room is <u>rather a</u> mess, isn't it?

- The ticket-holders made <u>quite a</u> fuss when they couldn't get in.
- <u>What an</u> idiot he turned out to be.
- Our vacation was <u>such a</u> grand experience.

Half, both, and *all* can occur with singular and plural **count nouns**; *half* and *all* can occur with **mass nouns**. There are also "of constructions" with these words ("all [of] the grain," "half [of] his salary"); the "of construction" is *required* with personal pronouns ("both of them," "all of it"). The following chart (from Quirk and Greenbaum) nicely describes the uses of these three predeterminers:
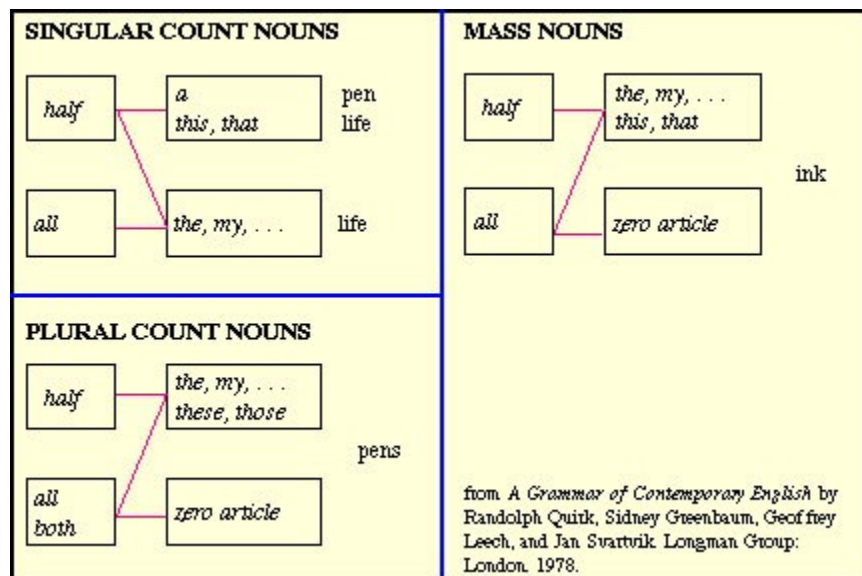
The Articles

The three articles — *a, an, the* — are a kind of **adjective**. *The* is called the **definite article** because it usually precedes a specific or previously mentioned **noun**; *a* and *an* are called **indefinite** articles because they are used to refer to something in a less specific manner (an unspecified count noun). These words are also listed among the **noun markers** or **determiners** because they are almost invariably followed by a noun (or something else acting as a noun).

> **CAUTION!** Even after you learn all the principles behind the use of these articles, you will find an abundance of situations where choosing the correct article or choosing whether to use one or not will prove chancy. Icy highways are dangerous. The icy highways are dangerous. And both are correct.

The is used with specific nouns. *The* is required when the noun it accompanies refers to something that is one of a kind:

The moon circles the earth.

The is required when the noun it accompanies refers to something in the abstract:

The United States has encouraged the use of the private automobile as opposed to the use of public transit.

The is required when the noun it accompanies refers to something named earlier in the text. (See **below.**.)

We use **a** before singular count-nouns that begin with consonants (a cow, a barn, a sheep); we use **an** before singular count-nouns that begin with vowels or vowel-like sounds (an apple, an urban blight, an open door). Words that begin with an *h* sound often require an *a* (as in a horse, a history book, a hotel), but if an h-word begins with an actual vowel sound, use an *an* (as in an hour, an honor). We would say *a useful device* and *a union matter* because the *u* of those words actually sounds like *yoo* (as opposed, say, to the *u* of *an ugly incident*). The same is true of *a European* and *a Euro* (because of that consonantal "Yoo" sound). We would say a once-in-a-lifetime experience or a one-time hero because the words *once* and *one* begin with a *w* sound (as if they were spelled *wuntz* and *won*).

> If you would like help with the distinction between count and non-count nouns, please refer to **Count and Non-Count Nouns**.

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary says that we can use *an* before an *h-* word that begins with an unstressed syllable. Thus, we might say an hisTORical moment, but we would say a HIStory book. Many

writers would call that an affectation and prefer that we say <u>a</u> historical, but apparently, this choice is a matter of personal taste.

For help on using articles with abbreviations and acronyms (*a* or *an* FBI agent?), see the section on **Abbreviations**.

First and subsequent reference: When we first refer to something in written text, we often use an indefinite article to modify it.

<u>A</u> newspaper has an obligation to seek out and tell the truth.

In a subsequent reference to this newspaper, however, we will use the definite article:

There are situations, however, when <u>the</u> newspaper must determine whether the public's safety is jeopardized by knowing the truth.

Another example:

"I'd like <u>a</u> glass of orange juice, please," John said.

"I put <u>the</u> glass of juice on the counter already," Sheila replied.

Exception:

When a modifier appears between the article and the noun, the subsequent article will continue to be indefinite:

"I'd like <u>a big</u> glass of orange juice, please," John said.

"I put <u>a big</u> glass of juice on the counter already," Sheila replied.

Generic reference: We can refer to something in a generic way by using any of the three articles. We can do the same thing by omitting the article altogether.

- <u>A</u> beagle makes a great hunting dog and family companion.
- <u>An</u> airedale is sometimes a rather skittish animal.
- <u>The</u> golden retriever is a marvelous pet for children.
- Irish setters are not the highly intelligent animals they used to be.

The difference between the generic indefinite pronoun and the normal indefinite pronoun is that the latter refers to any of that class ("I want to buy a beagle, and any old beagle will do.") whereas the former (see beagle sentence) refers to all members of that class.

Proper nouns: We use the definite article with certain kinds of proper nouns:

- Geographical places: the Sound, the Sea of Japan, the Mississippi, the West, the Smokies, the Sahara (but often *not* when the main part of the proper noun seems to be modified by an earlier attributive noun or adjective: We went swimming at ~~the~~ Ocean Park)
- Pluralized names (geographic, family, teams): the Netherlands, the Bahamas, the Hamptons, the Johnsons, the New England Patriots
- Public institutions/facilities/groups: the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Sheraton, the House, the Presbyterian Church
- Newspapers: the *Hartford Courant*, the *Times*
- Nouns followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with "of": the leader of the gang, the president of our club

Abstract nouns: Abstract nouns—the names of things that are not tangible—are sometimes used with articles, sometimes not:

- The storm upset <u>my</u> peace of mind. He was missing just one thing: peace of mind.
- Injustice was widespread within the judicial system itself. He implored the judge to correct <u>the</u> injustice.
- Her body was racked with grief. It was <u>a</u> grief he had never felt before.

Zero articles: Several kinds of nouns never use articles. We do not use articles with the names of languages ("He was learning Chinese." [But when the word Chinese refers to the people, the definite article might come into play: "The Chinese are hoping to get the next Olympics."]), the names of sports ("She plays badminton and basketball."), and academic subjects ("She's taking economics and math. Her major is Religious Studies.")

When they are generic, non-count nouns and sometimes plural count-nouns are used without articles. "We like *wine* with our dinner. We adore Baroque *music*. We use *roses* for many purposes." But if an "of phrase" comes after the noun, we use an article: "We adore <u>the</u> music <u>of</u> the Baroque." Also when a generic noun is used without an

article and then referred to in a subsequent reference, it will have become specific and will require a definite article: "The Data Center installed computers in the Learning Center this summer. <u>The</u> computers, unfortunately, don't work."

Common count nouns are used without articles in certain special situations:

idiomatic expressions using *be* and *go*	We'll go by train. (as opposed to "We'll take <u>the</u> train.) He must be in school.
with seasons	In spring, we like to clean the house.
with institutions	He's in church/college/jail/class.
with meals	Breakfast was delicious. He's preparing dinner by himself.
with diseases	He's dying of pneumonia. Appendicitis nearly killed him. She has cancer (You will sometimes hear "the measles," "the mumps," but these, too, can go without articles.)
with time of day	We traveled mostly by night. We'll be there around midnight.

Principles of Choosing an Article

Choosing articles and determiners: Briefly defined, a determiner is a noun-marker: when you see one, you know that what follows is a **noun** or **noun phrase**. There is a list of such words in the table below. When you place your mouse-cursor over a word or pair of related words (such as either/neither), you will see in the right-hand frame an image describing the kinds of words that word can modify. **Zero article** (see table below) means either that no article would be appropriate with that kind of noun or that that kind of noun *can* be used (in that context) without an article.

ARTICLES & DETERMINERS

A   An   The   Zero

This/That   These/Those

Each/Every   Either/Neither

Much   Enough

Which/What   Possessives

Stressed Some/Any

Unstressed Some/Any

Mouse-over the determiners in the left-hand box to see how they are used. (Images should appear here if your machine is javascript-enabled.)

If you would like to see these images listed on one page, click **HERE**.

Notice that there is a difference between a "stressed" *some* or *any* and an "unstressed" *some* or *any*. Consider the words in ALL CAPS as shouted words and you will hear the difference between these two:

- That is SOME car you've got there!
- I don't want to hear ANY excuse!

As opposed to. . .

- We have some cars left in the lot.
- Isn't there any furniture in the living room?

In terms of the words they usually modify, the unstressed *some* and *any* do not modify singular count nouns.

 Quiz on *A, An,* and *The*

Active / Passive Verb Forms

Sentences can be active or passive. Therefore, tenses also have "Active Forms" and "Passive Forms". You must learn to recognize the difference to successfully speak English.

ACTIVE FORM

In active sentences, the thing doing the action is the subject of the sentence and the thing receiving the action is the object. Most sentences are active.

[Thing doing action] + [VERB] + [thing receiving action]

EXAMPLES:

The professor   teaches   the students.
  (subject)   (active verb)   (object)
(doing action)   (receiving action)

John   washes   the dishes.
(subject)   (active verb)   (object)
(doing action)   (receiving action)

PASSIVE FORM

In some sentences, speakers use the passive form. In the passive form, the thing receiving the action is the subject and the thing doing the action is the object. You can use the passive form if you think the thing receiving the action is more important or should be emphasized.

[Thing receiving action] + [BE] + [past participle of verb] + [by] + [thing doing action]

EXAMPLES:

The students   are taught   by the professor.
(subject)   (passive verb)
(receiving action)   (doing action)

The dishes   are washed   by John.
(subject)   (passive verb)
(receiving action)   (doing action)

Present Conditionals

Present Real Conditional
FORM
[If / When ... SIMPLE PRESENT..., ... SIMPLE PRESENT ...]

USE

The Present Real Conditional is used to talk about what you normally do in real-life situations.

EXAMPLES:

If I go to a friends house for dinner, I usually take a bottle of wine or some flowers.

When I have a day off from work, I often go to the beach.

If the weather is nice, she walks to work.

Jerry helps me with my home work when he has time.

I read if there is nothing on TV.

What do you do when it rains?

I stay at home.

Where do you stay if you go to Sydney?

I stay with my friends near the harbor.

IMPORTANT   **If / When**

Both "if" and "when" are used in the Present Real Conditional. Using "if" suggests that something happens less frequently. Using "when" suggests that something happens regularly.

EXAMPLES:

When I have a day off from work, I usually go to the beach.

(I regularly have days off from work.)

If I have a day off from work, I usually go to the beach.

(I rarely have days off from work.)

Present Unreal Conditional

FORM

[If ... SIMPLE PAST ..., ... would + VERB ...]

USE

The Present Unreal Conditional is used to talk about what you would do in imaginary situations in general.

EXAMPLES:

If I had a car, I would drive to work. But I don't have a car.

She would travel around the world if she had more money. But she doesn't have much money.

I would read more if I didn't have a TV.

Mary would move to Japan if she spoke Japanese.

If they worked harder, they would earn more money.

What would you do if you won the lottery?

I would travel.

Where <u>would</u> you <u>live</u> if you <u>moved</u> to the U.S.?
I <u>would live</u> in Seattle.

EXCEPTION   If I were ...

In the Present Unreal Conditional, the form "was" is not considered grammatically correct. In written English or in testing situations, you should always use "were." However, in everyday conversation, "was" is often used.

EXAMPLES:

If he <u>were</u> French, he would live in Paris.

If she <u>were</u> rich, she would buy a yacht.

I would play basketball if I <u>were</u> taller.

I would buy that computer if it <u>were</u> cheaper.

I would buy that computer if it <u>was</u> cheaper. **NOT CORRECT (But often said in conversation.)**

EXCEPTION   Conditional with Modal Verbs

There are some special conditional forms for modal verbs in English:

would + can = could

would + shall = should

would + may = might

The words "can," "shall" and "may" must be used in these special forms; they cannot be used with "would."

EXAMPLES:

If I went to Egypt, I <u>would can</u> learn Arabic. **NOT CORRECT**

If I went to Egypt, I <u>could</u> learn Arabic. **CORRECT**

If she had time, she <u>would may</u> go to the party. **NOT CORRECT**

If she had time, she <u>might</u> go to the party. **CORRECT**

The words "could," should," "might" and "ought to" include conditional, so you cannot combine them with "would."

EXAMPLES:

If I had more time, I <u>would could</u> exercise after work. **NOT CORRECT**

If I had more time, I <u>could</u> exercise after work. **CORRECT**

If he invited you, you really <u>would should</u> go. **NOT CORRECT**

If he invited you, you really <u>should</u> go. **CORRECT**

IMPORTANT   Only use "If"

Only the word "if" is used with the Present Unreal Conditional because you are discussing imaginary situations. "When" cannot be used.

EXAMPLES:

I would buy that computer <u>when</u> it were cheaper. **NOT CORRECT**
I would buy that computer <u>if</u> it were cheaper. **CORRECT**

Exercises and Related Topics

Go to Present Conditional Exercises
Test your knowledge of Present Real Conditional vs. Present Unreal Conditional

Past Conditionals

Past Real Conditional

    FORM
[If / When ... SIMPLE PAST..., ... SIMPLE PAST.]
    USE
The Past Real Conditional describes what you used to do in particular real life situations. It suggests that your habits have changed and you do not usually do these things today.
    EXAMPLES:
    If I <u>went</u> to a friend's house for dinner, I usually <u>took</u> a bottle of wine or some flowers. I don't do that anymore.
    When I <u>had</u> a day off from work, I often <u>went</u> to the beach. Now, I never get time off.
    If the weather <u>was</u> nice, she often <u>walked</u> to work. Now, she usually drives.
    Jerry always <u>helped</u> me with my homework when he <u>had</u> time. But he doesn't do that anymore.
    I usually <u>read</u> if there <u>was</u> nothing on TV.
    What <u>did</u> you usually <u>do</u> when it <u>rained</u>?
I usually <u>stayed</u> at home.

    IMPORTANT **Used to**
The form "Used to" is often used to emphasize that the past action was a habit. If you are not familiar with the form "Used to," you can read about it in the English Page's **"Used to Page."**
    EXAMPLES:
    If I <u>went</u> to a friends house for dinner, I <u>used to take</u> a bottle of wine or some flowers. I don't do that anymore.
    When I <u>had</u> a day off from work, I <u>used to go</u> to the beach. Now, I never get time off.
    If the weather <u>was</u> nice, she <u>used to walk</u> to work. Now, she usually drives.

Jerry <u>used to help</u> me with my homework when he <u>had</u> time. But he doesn't do that anymore.

What <u>did</u> you <u>do</u> when it <u>rained</u>?
I <u>used to stay</u> at home.

IMPORTANT   If / When

Both "if" and "when" are used in the Past Real Conditional. Using "if" suggests that something happened less frequently. Using "when" suggests that something happened regularly.

EXAMPLES:

<u>When</u> I had a day off from work, I usually went to the beach.
(I regularly had days off from work.)

<u>If</u> I had a day off from work, I usually went to the beach.

(I rarely had days off from work.)

Past Unreal Conditional

FORM

[If ... PAST PERFECT ..., ... would have + PAST PARTICIPLE ...]

USE

The Past Unreal Conditional is used to talk about imaginary situations in the past. You can describe what you would have done differently or how something could have happened differently if circumstances had been different.

EXAMPLES:

If I <u>had had</u> a car, I <u>would have driven</u> to work. But I didn't have one, so I took the bus.

She <u>would have traveled</u> around the world if she <u>had had</u> more money. But she didn't have much money, so she never traveled.

I <u>would have read</u> more as a child if I <u>hadn't had</u> a TV. Unfortunately, I did have a TV, so I never read for entertainment.

Mary <u>would have gotten</u> the job and <u>moved</u> to Japan if she <u>had studied</u> Japanese in school instead of French.

If they <u>had worked</u> harder, they <u>would have earned</u> more money. Unfortunately, they were lazy and they didn't earn much.

What <u>would</u> you <u>have done</u> if you <u>had won</u> the lottery last week?
I <u>would have traveled</u>.

What city <u>would</u> you <u>have chosen</u> if you <u>had decided</u> to move to the United States?
I <u>would have chosen</u> Seattle.

EXCEPTION   Conditional with Modal Verbs

There are some special conditional forms for modal verbs in English:

would have + can = could have
would have + shall = should have
would have + may = might have

The words "can," "shall" and "may" must be used in these special forms; they cannot be used with "would have."

EXAMPLES:

If I had gone to Egypt, I <u>could have learned</u> Arabic. **CORRECT**

If she had had time, she <u>might have gone</u> to the party. **CORRECT**

The words "could," should," "might" and "ought to" include conditional, so you cannot combine them with "would."

EXAMPLES:

If I had had more time, I <u>would have could exercise</u> after work. **NOT CORRECT**

If I had had more time, I <u>could have exercised</u> after work. **CORRECT**

If he had invited you, you <u>would have might go</u>. **NOT CORRECT**

If he had invited you, you <u>might have gone</u> . **CORRECT**

IMPORTANT   Only use "If"

Only the word "if" is used with the Past Unreal Conditional because you are discussing imaginary situations. "When" cannot be used.

EXAMPLES:

I would have bought that computer <u>when</u> it had been cheaper. **NOT CORRECT**

I would have bought that computer <u>if</u> it had been cheaper. **CORRECT**

Exercises and Related Topics

Past Conditional Exercises Test your knowledge of Past Real Conditional vs. Past Unreal Conditional vs. Present Real Conditional

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Future Conditionals

Future Real Conditional
FORM

[If / When ...SIMPLE PRESENT..., ... SIMPLE FUTURE.]

USE

The Future Real Conditional describes what you think you will do in a specific situation in the future. It is different from other real conditional forms because unlike the present or the past, you do not know what will happen in the future. Although this form is called a "real conditional," you are usually imagining or guessing about the future. It is called "real" because it is still possible that the action might occur in the future. Carefully study the following examples and compare them to the Future Unreal Conditional described below.

EXAMPLES:

If I go to a friend's house for dinner tonight, I will take a bottle of wine or some flowers.
(I am still not sure if I will go to his house or not.)
When I have a day off from work, I am going to go to the beach.
(I have to wait until I have a day off.)
If the weather is nice, she is going to walk to work.
(It depends on the weather.)
Jerry will help me with my homework when he has time.
(I have to wait until he has time.)
I am going to read if there is nothing on TV.
(It depends on the TV schedule.)
What are you going to do if it rains?
I am going to stay at home.

IMPORTANT   **If / When**

Both "if" and "when" are used in the Future Real Conditional, but the use is different from other real conditionals. In the Future Real Conditional, "if" suggests that you do not know if something will happen or not. "When" suggests that something will definitely happen at some point; we are simply waiting for it to occur. Notice also that the Simple Future is not used in "if' clauses or "when" clauses.

EXAMPLES:

When you **call** me, I will give you the address.
(You are going to call me later, and at that time, I will give you the address.)
If you **call** me, I will give you the address.
(If you want the address, you can call me.)

Future Unreal Conditional

FORM

[If ... SIMPLE PAST ..., ... would + VERB ...]

Notice the form looks the same as Present Unreal Conditional.

USE

The Future Unreal Conditional is used to talk about imaginary situations in the future. It is not as common as the Future Real Conditional because most English speakers leave open the possibility that anything MIGHT happen in the future. It is only used when a speaker needs to emphasize that something really is impossible.

EXAMPLES:

If I <u>had</u> a day off from work next week, I <u>would go</u> to the beach.
(I don't have a day off from work.)

I am busy next week. If I <u>had</u> time, I <u>would come</u> to your party.
(I can't come.)

Jerry <u>would help</u> me with my homework tomorrow if he <u>didn't have to</u> work.
(However, he does have to work tomorrow.)

EXCEPTION   **Conditional with Modal Verbs**

There are some special conditional forms for modal verbs in English:

would + can = could

would + shall = should

would + may = might

The words "can," "shall" and "may" must be used in these special forms; they cannot be used with "would."

EXAMPLES:

If I went to Egypt next year, I <u>would can</u> learn Arabic. Unfortunately, that's not possible. **NOT CORRECT**

If I went to Egypt next year, I <u>could</u> learn Arabic. Unfortunately, that's not possible. **CORRECT**

The words "could," should," "might" and "ought to" include conditional, so you cannot combine them with "would."

EXAMPLES:

If I didn't have to work tonight, I <u>would could</u> go to the fitness center. **NOT CORRECT**

If I didn't have to work tonight, I <u>could</u> go to the fitness center. **CORRECT**

IMPORTANT   **Only use "If"**

Only the word "if" is used with the Past Unreal Conditional because you are discussing imaginary situations. "When" cannot be used.

EXAMPLES:

I would buy that computer tomorrow <u>when</u> it were cheaper. **NOT CORRECT**

I would buy that computer tomorrow <u>if</u> it were cheaper. **CORRECT**

IMPORTANT   **Alternate Forms of Future Unreal Conditional**

There are alternate forms of the Future Unreal Conditional which have developed in English. Study the examples below:

[If... were to + VERB... , ... would + VERB...]

If I <u>were to lose</u> my job, I <u>would</u> probably <u>find</u> a new one quickly.

If he <u>were to fail</u> his driving test, he <u>would have to</u> take it again.

If Sarah <u>were to show</u> up late to the birthday party, it <u>would ruin</u> the surprise.

[If... should happen to + VERB... , ... would + VERB...]

If I <u>should happen to lose</u> my job, I <u>would</u> probably <u>find</u> a new one quickly.

If he <u>should happen to fail</u> his driving test, he <u>would have to</u> take it again.

If Sarah <u>should happen to show</u> up late to the birthday party, it <u>would ruin</u> the surprise.

Compare Both Forms

To help you understand the difference between the two forms above, compare the examples below:

EXAMPLES:

If you help me move tomorrow, I will buy you dinner. **FUTURE REAL CONDITIONAL**

(I don't know if you can help me.)

If you helped me move tomorrow, I would buy you dinner. **FUTURE UNREAL CONDITIONAL**

(You can't help me, or you don't want to help me.)

Exercises and Related Topics

Future Conditional Exercises Test your knowledge of Future Real Conditional vs. Future Unreal Conditional

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CONDITIONAL OVERVIEW WITH EXAMPLES

Present Real Conditional	Present Unreal Conditional
If I have time, I study English. (Sometimes I have time.)	If I had time, I would study English. (I don't have time.)

Past Real Conditional	Past Unreal Conditional
If I had time, I studied English. (Somtimes I had time.)	If I had had time, I would have studied English. (I didn't have time.)

Future Real Conditional	Future Unreal Conditional
If I have time, I will study English. If I have time, I am going to study English. (I don't know if I will have time or not.) Other forms possible.	If I had time, I would study English. (I won't have time.) Other forms possible.

If you have any conditional questions go to **English Page FAQ**

Modal Verb Introduction

Modals are special verbs which behave very irregularly in English. Englishpage.com has created one of the most in-depth modal tutorials in print or online. Study the modal explanations and complete the associated exercises and take another step toward English fluency. If you want to use the Modal Verb Pages as a reference only and do not want to complete the tutorial **Click Here**.

The tutorial should be completed as follows:

1. Read this "Modal Introduction" completely. Each Modal Exercise has associated grammar explanations to help you improve your knowlegde of the Modal Verbs and related expressions.

2. The first exercise, **Modal 1**, focuses on the basic modals **can**, **could**, **have to**, **must**, **might** and **should**.

3. Exercise **Modal 2** focuses on the differences between **have to** and **must**.

4. Exercise **Modal 3** first focuses on **might**, **must** and **should**. Afterwards, you can repeat the exercise using **could**, **have to** and **ought to**.

5. Exercise **Modal 4** focuses on the differences between **couldn't** and **might not**.

6. Exercise **Modal 5** focuses on **have got to**, **had better**, **may** and **shall**.

7. Exercise **Modal 6** focuses on **could**, **might**, **should** and **would**.

8. Exercise **Modal 7** focuses on various **modal verbs forms**.

9. Review the **modal verbs** and complete the **Modal Verb Final Test**

What are Modal Verbs ?

Modal Verbs are special verbs which behave very differently from normal verbs. Here are some important differences:

1. Modal Verbs do not take "-s" in the third person.

He <u>can </u> speak Chinese.
She <u>should </u> be here by 9:00.

2. You use "not" to make Modal Verbs negative, even in Simple Present and Simple Past.

EXAMPLES:

He <u>should not</u> be late.
They <u>might not</u> come to the party.

3. Many Modal Verbs cannot be used in the past tenses or the future tenses.

EXAMPLES:

He *will can* go with us. **NOT CORRECT**
She *musted* study very hard. **NOT CORRECT**

Common Modal Verbs

Can	Ought to
Could	Shall
May	Should
Might	Will
Must	Would

IMPORTANT: For the purposes of this tutorial, we have included some expressions which are not Modal Verbs including **had better**, **have to** and **have got to**. These expressions are closely related to Modals in meaning and are often interchanged with them.

Can

Modal Use	1. Present	Negative Forms	You

	2. Past 3. Future		can also use:

can
general ability
	1. I can speak Chinese
	
	    2. SHIFTS TO "COULD"
	I could speak Chinese when I was a kid.
	
	    3. SHIFTS TO "BE ABLE TO"
	I will be able to speak Chinese by the time I finish my course.
		1. I can't speak Swahili.
		
		    2. SHIFTS TO "COULD"
		I couldn't speak Swahili.
		
		    3. SHIFTS TO "BE ABLE TO"
		I won't be able to speak Swahili.
			to be able

can
ability during a specific event
	1. With a burst of adrenaline, people can pick up cars.
	
	    2. SHIFTS TO "BE ABLE TO"
	With a sudden burst of adrenaline, he was able to lift the car off the child's leg.
	
	    3. SHIFTS TO "BE ABLE TO"
	With a sudden burst of adrenaline, he will be able to lift the car.
		1. People can't pick up cars.
		
		    2. SHIFTS TO "BE ABLE TO"
		Even the weight lifter, couldn't lift the car off the child's leg.
		
		    3. SHIFTS TO "BE ABLE TO"
		Even three men working together won't be able to lift the car.
			to be able

can
opportunity
	1. I have some free time. I can help her now.
	
	    2. SHIFTS TO "BE ABLE TO"
	I had some free time
		1. I don't have any time. I can't help her now.
		
		    2. SHIFTS TO "BE ABLE TO"
		I didn't have time
			to be able

	yesterday. I was able to help her at that time. 3. I'll have some free time tomorrow. I can help her then.	yesterday. I wasn't able to help her at that time. 3. I won't have any time later. I can't help her then.	
can permission	1. I can drive Susan's car when she is out of town. 2. SHIFTS TO "BE ALLOWED" I was allowed to drive Susan's car while she was out of town last week. 3. I can drive Susan's car while she is out of town next week.	1. I can't drive Susan's car when she is out of town. 2. SHIFTS TO "BE ALLOWED" I wasn't allowed to drive Susan's car while she was out of town last week. 3. I can't drive Susan's car while she is out of town next week.	may
can request	Can I have a glass of water? Can you give me a lift to school? (Requests usually refer to the near future.)	Can't I have a glass of water? Can't you give me a lift to school? (Requests usually refer to the near future.)	could may
can possibility / impossibility	Anyone can become rich and famous if they know the right people. Learning a language can be a real challenge.	It can't cost more than a dollar or two. You can't be 45! I thought you were	could

	(This use is usually a generalization or an supposition.)	about 18 years old. (This use is usually a generalization or an supposition.)	

Could

Modal Use	1. Present 2. Past 3. Future	Negative Forms	You can also use:
could possibility	1. John could be the one who stole the money. 2. John could have been the one who stole the money. 3. John could be charged with the crime when the police finish the investigation.	1. Mary couldn't be the one who stole the money. 2. Mary couldn't have been the one who stole the money. 3. Mary couldn't possibly be charge with the crime after the police examine the evidence.	might, may
could conditional (can, could)	1. If I had more time, I could travel around the world. 2. If I had had more time, I could have traveled around the world. 3. If I had more time this winter, I could travel	1. Even if I had more time, I couldn't travel around the world. 2. Even if I had had more time, I couldn't have traveled around the world. 3. Even if I had more time this winter, I could travel around the world.	

	around the world.		
could suggestion	1. NO PRESENT FORM 2. You could have spent your vacation in Hawaii. 3. You could spend your vacation in Hawaii.	NO NEGATIVE FORMS	
could past ability	I could run ten miles in my twenties. I could speak Chinese when I was a kid.	I couldn't run more than a mile in my twenties. I couldn't speak Swahili.	be able to
could polite request	Could I have something to drink? Could borrow your stapler? (Requests usually refer to the near future.)	Couldn't he come with us? Couldn't you help me with this for just a second? (Requests usually refer to the near future.)	can, may, might

Have to

Modal Use	1. Present 2. Past 3. Future	Negative Forms	You can also use:
have to certainty	1. That has to be Jerry. They said he was tall	1. SHIFTS TO "MUST" That must not have been	must, have

	with bright red hair.
	
	    2. That has to have been the right restaurant. There are no other restaurants on this street.
	
	    3. NONE
		Jerry we saw. He was supposed to have red hair.
		
		    2. SHIFTS TO "MUST" That must not have been the right restaurant. I guess there is another one around here somewhere.
		
		    3. NONE
			got to

have to
necessity
	1. She has to read four books for this literature class.
	
	    2. She had to finish the first book before the midterm.
	
	    3. She will have to finish the other books before the final exam.
		1. She doesn't have to read "Grapes of Wrath." It's optional reading for extra credit.
		
		    2. She didn't have to write a critique of "The Scarlet Letter." She had to give a presentation to her class.
		
		    3. She won't have to take any other literature classes. American Literature 101 is the only required course.
			must

don't have to
choice/ no obligation
	1. I don't have to take any tests. The course is just for fun.
	
	    2. I didn't have to take the test. The teacher let me do a report instead.
	
	    3. I won't have to take the test. It's going to be for extra credit and		

	I don't need the points.		

REMEMBER: "Do not have to" vs. "Must not" "Do not have to" suggests that someone is not required to do something. "Must not" suggests that you are prohibited from doing something.

Must

Modal Use	1. Present 2. Past 3. Future	Negative Forms	You can also use:
must certainty	1. That must be Jerry. They said he was tall with bright red hair. 2. That must have been the right restaurant. There are no other restaurants on this street. 3. NO FUTURE FORM	1. That must not be Jerry. He is supposed to have red hair. 2. That must not have been the right restaurant. I guess there is another one around here somewhere. 3. NO FUTURE FORM	have to
must not prohibition	You must not swim in that river. It's full of crocodiles. You must not forget to take your malaria medication while your are in the tropics.		

	(Prohibition usually refer to the near future.)		
must strong recommendation (Americans prefer the form "should.")	1. You must take some time off and get some rest. 2. SHIFT TO "SHOULD" You should have taken some time off last week to get some rest. 3. SHIFT TO "SHOULD" You should take some time off next week to get some rest.	1. You mustn't drink so much. It's not good for your health. 2. SHIFT TO "SHOULD" You shouldn't have drunk so much. That caused the accident. 3. SHIFT TO "SHOULD" You shouldn't drink at the party. You are going to be the designated driver.	should
must necessity (Americans prefer the form "have to.")	1. You must have a permit to enter the national park. 2. SHIFT TO "HAVE TO" We had to have a permit to enter the park. 3. We must get a permit to enter the park next week.	1. SHIFT TO "HAVE TO" We don't have to get a permit to enter the national park. 2. SHIFT TO "HAVE TO" We didn't have to get a permit to enter the national park. 3. SHIFT TO "HAVE TO" We won't have to get a permit to enter the national park.	have to

Might

Modal Use	1. Present 2. Past 3. Future	Negative Forms	You can also use:
might possibility	1. She might be on the bus. I think her car is having problems. 2. She might have taken the bus. I'm not sure how she got to work. 3. She might take the bus to get home. I don't think Bill will be able to give her a ride.	1. She might not be on the bus. She might be walking home. 2. She might not have taken the bus. She might have walked home. 3. She might not take the bus. She might get a ride from Bill.	could, may
might conditional (may, might)	1. If I entered the contest, I might actually win. 2. If I had entered the contest, I might actually have won. 3. If I entered the contest tomorrow, I might actually win. Unfortunately, I can't enter it.	1. Even if I entered the contest, I might not win. 2. Even if I had entered the contest, I might not have won. 3. Even if I entered the contest tomorrow, I might not win.	
might suggestion	1. NO PRESENT FORM 2. You might have tried the cheese cake.	1. NO PRESENT FORM 2. PAST FORM UNCOMMON	could

	3. You might try the cheesecake.	3. You might not want to eat the cheese cake. It's very calorific.	
might request (British form)	Might I have something to drink? Might I borrow the stapler? (Requests usually refer to the near future.)	NEGATIVE FORMS UNCOMMON	could, may, can

REMEMBER: "Might not" vs. "Could not" "Might not" suggests you do not know if something happens. "Could not" suggests that it is impossible for something to happen.

Should

Modal Use	1. Present 2. Past 3. Future	Negative Forms	You can also use:
should recommendation advisability	1. People with high cholesterol should eat low fat foods. 2. Frank should have eaten low fat foods. That might have prevented his heart attack. 3. You really should start eating better.	1. Sarah shouldn't smoke so much. It's not good for her health. 2. Sarah shouldn't have smoked so much. That's what caused her health problems. 3. Sarah	ought to

		shouldn't smoke when she visits Martha next week. Martha hates when people smoke in her house.	
should obligation	I should be at work before 9:00. We should return the video before the video rental store closes. ("Should" can also express something between recommendation and obligation. "Be supposed to" expresses a similar idea and can easily be used in the past or in negative forms.)	NO NEGATIVE FORMS	be supposed, to
should assumption/ expectation/ probability	1. Susan should be in New York by now. 2. Susan should have arrived in New York last week. Let's call her and see what she is up to. 3. Susan should be in New York by next week. Her new job starts on Monday.	1. Susan shouldn't be in New York yet. 2. Susan shouldn't have arrived in New York until yesterday. 3. Susan shouldn't arrive in New York until next week.	ought to, be supposed to

Have to

Modal Use	1. Present 2. Past 3. Future	Negative Forms	You can also use:
have to certainty	1. That has to be Jerry. They said he was tall with bright red hair. 2. That has to have been the right restaurant. There are no other restaurants on this street. 3. NONE	1. SHIFTS TO "MUST" That must not have been Jerry we saw. He was supposed to have red hair. 2. SHIFTS TO "MUST" That must not have been the right restaurant. I guess there is another one around here somewhere. 3. NONE	must, have got to
have to necessity	1. She has to read four books for this literature class. 2. She had to finish the first book before the midterm. 3. She will have to finish the other books before the final exam.	1. She doesn't have to read "Grapes of Wrath." It's optional reading for extra credit. 2. She didn't have to write a critique of "The Scarlet Letter." She had to give a presentation to her class. 3. She won't have to take any other literature classes. American Literature 101 is the only required course.	must

don't have to
choice/ no obligation
	1. I don't have to take any tests. The course is just for fun.
	
	   2. I didn't have to take the test. The teacher let me do a report instead.
	
	   3. I won't have to take the test. It's going to be for extra credit and I don't need the points.		

REMEMBER: "Do not have to" vs. "Must not"
"Do not have to" suggests that someone is not required to do something. "Must not" suggests that you are prohibited from doing something.

Must

Modal Use	1. Present 2. Past 3. Future	Negative Forms	You can also use:

must
certainty
	1. That must be Jerry. They said he was tall with bright red hair.
	
	   2. That must have been the right restaurant. There are no other restaurants on this street.
	
	   3. NO FUTURE
		1. That must not be Jerry. He is supposed to have red hair.
		
		   2. That must not have been the right restaurant. I guess there is another one around here somewhere.
			have to

	FORM	3. NO FUTURE FORM	
must not prohibition	You must not swim in that river. It's full of crocodiles. You must not forget to take your malaria medication while your are in the tropics. (Prohibition usually refer to the near future.)		
must strong recommendation (Americans prefer the form "should.")	1. You must take some time off and get some rest. 2. SHIFT TO "SHOULD" You should have taken some time off last week to get some rest. 3. SHIFT TO "SHOULD" You should take some time off next week to get some rest.	1. You mustn't drink so much. It's not good for your health. 2. SHIFT TO "SHOULD" You shouldn't have drunk so much. That caused the accident. 3. SHIFT TO "SHOULD" You shouldn't drink at the party. You are going to be the designated driver.	should
must necessity (Americans prefer	1. You must have a permit to enter the national park. 2. SHIFT TO "HAVE TO" We had to have a	1. SHIFT TO "HAVE TO" We don't have to get a permit to enter the national park. 2. SHIFT TO "HAVE	have to

the form "have to.")	permit to enter the park.
	
	   3. We must get a permit to enter the park next week.
		TO"
		We didn't have to get a permit to enter the national park.
		
		   3. SHIFT TO "HAVE TO"
		We won't have to get a permit to enter the national park.	